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A Probable Hafted Uniface from the Clovis Occupation at the Topper Site, 38AL23, Allendale County, South Carolina

D. Shane Miller and Albert C. Goodyear

The Topper site, a prehistoric chert quarry on an upland bluff adjacent to the Savannah River, shows human utilization spanning some 13,500 years and possibly more (Goodyear 2005a, 2005b). The site has a prominent Clovis occupation associated with the quarry (Goodyear and Steffy 2003; Steffy and Goodyear 2006). In 2004, an impressive Clovis occupation was discovered on the hillside resulting in yearly excavations from 2004 to 2007. As of the 2007 season, a total of 186 m² had been excavated. The largest of these excavations is a 64-m² block dug in 2006, the assemblage from which has been recently analyzed (Miller 2007).

As more Clovis sites in North America are excavated, increasing attention is being paid to defining the lithic inventories beyond just projectile points such as those from presumed kill sites (Collins 2007). In the 2006 hillside block excavation, an unusual uniface was recovered within the Clovis deposit that merits special attention.

The tool, made on a thick flake formed by unifacial retouch on all margins, is 11.0 cm long, 7.3 cm wide, 6.3 cm thick, and weighs 155.55 g. In plan view it is nearly rectangular and has a strong trapezoidal cross section (Figure 1). Steep systematic percussion flaking was conducted from the ventral face of the flake with more than one series on the bit. These flake scars do not indicate that the tool was made from a former blade core. The bit is essentially straight with a minor depression in the direct center. The bit is sharp but exhibits several stages of flaking and step fracturing, probably indicating prior use and resharpening. The bit edge angle is steep, ranging from 80 to 90 degrees. Because of this steep angle, the tool probably functioned more in a scraping-chopping mode. Adzing seems unlikely, since the bit face interferes with the required low angle of an adze bit. Morphologically, it might be described as a scraper-plane. However, there is no microchipping or nibbling on the ventral face of the bit indicating it was pushed.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the tool is the heavily ground lateral

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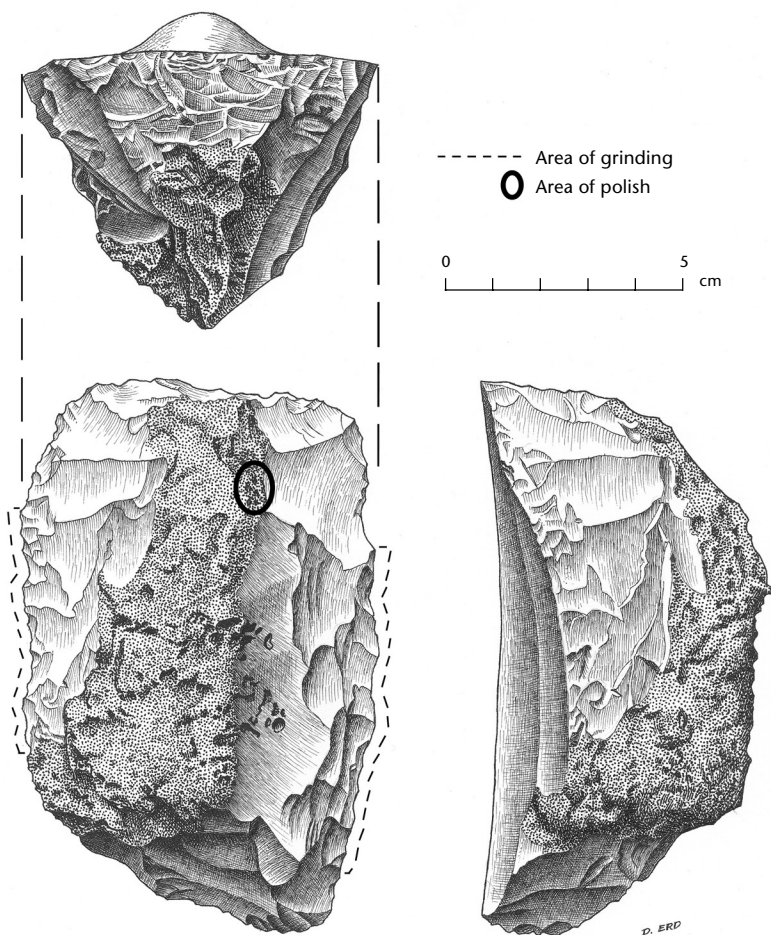


Figure 1. Three views of a probable hafted uniface from the 2006 Topper Clovis Hillside Firebreak excavation.

margins, which strongly suggest haft preparations. Grinding is so heavy as to have removed flake scars on the immediate margin. The sheer heft of this tool coupled with probable hafting indicates a heavy-duty scraping-chopping implement. The location of very bright polish on the dorsal surface of the tool in the cortex area is not consistent with functional polish; rather likely the polish resulted from wear from an organic form of lashing used to secure the piece to its haft. Similar core/tools have been described for Wells Creek Crater (Dragoo 1973:41,43) in Tennessee and particularly the Adams site (Sanders 1990:107) in Kentucky, but with no mention of edge grinding. Such a hafted tool may indicate intensive woodworking by the Clovis occupants of Topper, an activity that might have been combined with seasonal uses of the chert quarry, where large cores and choppers would have been readily available.

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